

Amendments to the Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A prosthesis to replace all or a portion of a natural facet joint on a vertebral [body] body, [comprising] comprising:
a fastening element adapted to be installed within the vertebral body at or near a pedicle and without support by a [lamina,] lamina; and
an artificial facet joint structure carried by the fastening element adapted and configured to replace all or a portion of a natural facet joint.
2. (Original) A prosthesis according to claim 1 wherein the artificial facet joint structure is fixed to the fastening element.
3. (Withdrawn) A prosthesis according to claim 1 wherein the artificial facet joint structure is fixed to the fastening element by an adhesive or cement.
4. (Original) A prosthesis according to claim 1 wherein the artificial facet joint structure is fixed to the fastening element by mechanical attachment.
5. (Original) A prosthesis according to claim 1 wherein the artificial facet joint structure is removably carried by the fastening element.
6. (Original) A prosthesis according to claim 1 wherein the artificial facet joint structure is removably attached to the fastening element by frictional engagement.
7. (Withdrawn) A prosthesis according to claim 1 wherein the artificial facet joint structure is removably attached to the fastening element by a Morse taper.
8. (Original) A prosthesis according to claim 1 wherein the artificial facet joint structure comprises an insert fitted to the fastening element.
9. (Original) A prosthesis according to claim 1 wherein the artificial facet joint structure comprises an insert fitted by frictional engagement to the fastening element.
10. (Withdrawn) A prosthesis according to claim 1 wherein the artificial facet joint structure comprises an insert fitted by a Morse taper to the fastening element.
11. (Original) A prosthesis according to claim 1 wherein the artificial facet joint structure comprises a removable insert fitted to the fastening element.
12. (Original) A prosthesis according to claim 1 wherein the artificial facet joint structure pivots with respect to the fastening element.

13. (Original) A prosthesis according to claim 1 wherein the artificial facet joint structure is adapted and configured to articulate with a portion of a facet joint of an adjoining vertebral body.

14. (Original) A prosthesis according to claim 1 wherein the artificial facet joint structure is adapted and configured to replace a caudal portion of a natural facet joint.

15. (Original) A prosthesis according to claim 1 wherein the artificial facet joint structure is adapted and configured to replace a caudal portion of a natural facet joint and articulate with a cephalad portion of a facet joint of an adjoining vertebral body.

16. (Original) A prosthesis according to claim 1 wherein the artificial facet joint structure is made of at least one selected prosthetic material.

17. (Original) A prosthesis according to claim 1 wherein the selected prosthetic material includes polyethylene, rubber, tantalum, titanium, chrome cobalt, surgical steel, bony in-growth material, ceramic, artificial bone, or a combination thereof.

18. (Original) A prosthesis according to claim 1 wherein the fastening element is fixed to the vertebral body by an adhesive or cement.

19. (Original) A prosthesis according to claim 1 wherein the fastening element includes a bony in-growth material.

20. (Withdrawn) A method of replacing, on a vertebral body, all or a portion of a natural facet joint using the prosthesis defined in claim 1 to provide improved support for the spinal column, the method comprising the steps of

(i) removing all or a portion of a natural articular process from the vertebral body, and

(ii) fixing the prosthesis as defined in claim 1 to the vertebral body to replace the removed portion of the natural articular process with the artificial facet joint structure.

21. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 20 further including a step of removing at least some of the lamina from the vertebral body.

22. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 20 further including a step of removing at least part of a pedicle from the vertebral body.